

Matthew 8:14-17

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Matthew records his third account of a specific miracle. Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law of a fever. Later that evening some people bring Him many who were demon-possessed. Jesus frees them from their spiritual bondage. Matthew points out that these instances and others is a direct fulfillment of Isaiah 53:4. This is the tenth time Matthew has said Jesus fulfilled an Old Testament prophecy concerning the Messiah.

The parallel accounts of this event are found in Mark 1:29-34 and Luke 4:38-41.

Not long after Jesus's encounter with the Centurion of great faith, *Jesus enters the home of Peter, His disciple. Peter was a fisherman who lived in Capernaum. If this was the same day that Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount to His disciples, and healed the leper, and healed the centurion's servant, then His arrival at Peter's house probably took place in the late afternoon. After Jesus entered the house, He saw Peter's mother-in-law lying sick in bed with a fever. Matthew says that as Jesus touched her hand the fever left her. After she felt better, Peter's mother-in-law got up from her bed and waited on Jesus. She might have served Him a meal or gave him something to drink after a long day of teaching, interacting with the crowds, and healing others. After Jesus had served her, Peter's mother-in-law was now reciprocating the service back to Him.*

All three of the Gospels which describe this miracle do so according to their own theme.

Matthew's Gospel which presents *Jesus* as the Messianic King, says that *Jesus touched her hand* (as a royal king might do) and *the fever left her* at His royal command. Matthew draws on this theme just after reporting what happens. More on this in a moment.

Mark's Gospel which presents *Jesus* as a Servant, says that *Jesus* "raised her up, taking her by the hand" (as servant might do)" and *she* was healed (Mark 1:31).

Luke's Gospel which presents *Jesus* as the perfect, ideal man, says that *Jesus* was "standing over her (as a knowledgeable physician might do) rebuked the fever, and it left her" (Luke 4:39). After investigating "everything carefully from the beginning" (Luke 1:3), Luke likely thought it important to include *Jesus*' verbal rebuke to display *His* ultimate power over the created order.

When evening came they brought many who were demon-possessed (v 16).

The word Matthew uses that is translated evening is "opsios" (G3798). It refers to the time between 6:00 pm and nightfall. The pronoun *they* in this sentence is without an explicit reference, but *they* likely refers to the multitudes who saw or heard about *Jesus*'s exorcism of an unclean spirit from a man that took place in the synagogue earlier that day. This event is told by Mark and Luke (Mark 1:21-27; Luke 4:31-36).

Of that miraculous incident Mark reports: “Immediately the news about Him spread everywhere into all the surrounding district of Galilee” (Mark 1:28).

Matthew says that they bring many people who were demon-possessed. Many is not a specific term, but it is likely more than three or four.

The seemingly innocuous phrase – *when evening came* – is the Gospel writer’s way to let us know that the Sabbath was over. Mark and Luke’s parallel accounts of this event clearly establish that it took place on the Sabbath. The day *Jesus* healed *Peter’s mother-in-law* was the same day *He* cast out an unclean spirit while teaching in the Synagogue (Mark 1:21-31, Luke 4:31-39). This day was a Sabbath day (Luke 4:31).

Jewish days end at sunset. God commanded His people to rest from their labor on the Sabbath (Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15). The Sabbath laws that were taught by the Pharisees limited the amount of work the people could perform on the Sabbath. Which explains why they waited *until evening came to bring Him many who were demon possessed* following His public exorcism in the synagogue earlier that day.

All three Gospel writers who report on this event comment on the fact that night had come as a way to express that the Sabbath was over (Mark 1:32; Luke 4:40).

The amazing news spread very quickly all throughout the district of *Jesus’s* casting out of the unclean spirit (Luke 4:37). Others may have heard about *Peter’s mother-in-law*. So *when evening came* and the Sabbath was over, *they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed; and He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were ill.*

Matthew says that *they* bring *many* people *who were demon-possessed*. *Many* is not a specific term, but it is likely more than three or four.

Demons are evil supernatural beings. The world we inhabit is both physical and spiritual. There is an interconnectedness between these two dimensions. Both the physical and spiritual dimensions were created by God. The Bible affirms that both the physical world and spiritual world are real. The physical dimension is more tangible to our physical bodies and their senses. It can, in part, be quantified and measured by human art and science. But the supernatural world, though largely invisible to us, is no less real. As human beings who have both a body and a spirit, we have both a physical and a spiritual nature. Angels and demons (and God, until He came to earth as a Man at the birth of Jesus) only have a spiritual nature.

Demons are the fallen angels who joined Lucifer, the archangel, in his rebellion against God. In describing this event, Revelation 12:4 says that one third of the angels fell with Lucifer.

Lucifer was apparently the highest ranking archangel. His name is only mentioned once in scripture, and in Hebrew it is Heylel, which means “light-bearer” (Isaiah 14:12). In jealousy and pride, he rebelled against the omnipotent God and was demoted, and will be cast out of Heaven (Isaiah 14:12-17; Revelation 12:10-12). He is the “serpent of old” who tempted God’s image bearers and stewards of creation, Adam and Eve, to disobey God (Revelation 12:9). Lucifer is

also called the devil, or by his role as Satan which means “accuser” (Revelation 12:10). Lucifer either usurped Adam and Eve’s authority and is now the prince of this age, or perhaps held that authority pending Adam and Eve and their offspring fully occupying their assigned station to have dominion over the earth (Psalm 8). Jesus will eventually crush Satan and restore humans to rule the earth, with Him as their king (Genesis 3:15, Romans 16:20, Revelation 20:10). In the meantime Lucifer, the devil, is the ruler of this world (John 12:31;16:11).

Referring to the Satan (accuser), *Jesus* says that “The thief comes only to steal, kill, and destroy” (John 10:10). Peter warns his readers to be on the lookout for the devil’s schemes: “Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8). With all the brokenness, depravity, and human wickedness we encounter in this world, Paul reminds us who the real enemy is: “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12).

During this present age (between the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, and the final defeat of Satan) the devil is the unlawful tyrant of the universe who abuses his power to bring harm to those he hates, namely God’s image bearers. The most common way that Satan achieves his malicious goals is convincing people to disobey God’s good order and, like him, rebel. Selfishly do as you please and take whatever you want from others through the abuses of force or fraud. Satan’s kingdom is built on pride, envy, lust, and hatred. Satan desires that we behave as tyrants ourselves. Just the opposite of the mercy principle/golden rule ethic of the Sermon on the Mount.

Jesus taught and lived in obedience to His Father (John 5:19). He came to serve first. He loved people. He sacrificially gave of Himself for their best interest. He invites us to set aside our own rights and desires for His sake and to serve alongside Him in this life now so that we will share with Him in His reign and glory for the rest of eternity. Because *Jesus* humbled Himself, served others, and obeyed God perfectly, He will be exalted above every other name (Philippians 2:10). Satan wants to rob us of this opportunity.

Another way the devil harms people is through gaining strong influence over their minds or bodies. When this occurs that person is *demon-possessed*. As God, *Jesus* has authority over all things—including demons. *He cast out the spirits with a word*. *Jesus* had the power to restore people to physical health as well as spiritual wholeness. Matthew shows us that *Jesus* had these powers as he retold the supernatural events of Chapter 8, beginning with *Jesus* healing a leper, a paralytic, and a feverish woman, and now in the *evening Jesus casts out evil spirits*. Later in the chapter, we will see that *Jesus* had power over nature and its weather (Matthew 8:23-27).

Matthew adds that *Jesus healed all who were ill*. He could mean several things by this phrase. He could mean a spiritual illness of being *possessed* by demons. He could mean that others who were physically ill, but not *demon-possessed* were *brought to Him* and healed. Or Matthew could be telling us that those who were demon-possessed also suffered physically from this horrendous experience and were in need of physical healing also. This would align with what the father of a *demon-possessed* son told *Jesus* in Mark 12:22, “[The demon] has often thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, take pity on us and help us!”

After these accounts, Matthew points out to his Jewish readers that by performing these miracles *Jesus* once again proves that He is the Messiah, because they *fulfill what was spoken* in the Messianic prophecy from *Isaiah*. That *Jesus Himself took our infirmities and carried away our diseases*. This is a reference to *Isaiah 53*:

“Surely our griefs He Himself bore,
And our sorrows He carried;
Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten of God, and afflicted.”
(*Isaiah 53:4*)

This is the tenth time Matthew has either quoted the Old Testament or stated that *Jesus* fulfilled *what was prophesied* of Him. Matthew continues to provide evidence to support his initial claim in chapter 1 that Jesus is the promised Messiah, or Christ (*Matthew 1:1,16*).

Biblical Text

8:14-17 When Jesus came into Peter’s home, He saw his mother-in-law lying sick in bed with a fever. He touched her hand, and the fever left her; and she got up and waited on Him. When evening came, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed; and He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were ill. This was to fulfill what was spoken through *Isaiah* the prophet: “He Himself took our infirmities and carried away our diseases.”